

Regardless of which date is chosen for the digital transition, there should be an obligation of ALL program service providers, be they traditional over the air broadcast, cable or satellite, to provide at least one subchannel of their service to provide continuous political coverage in the manner of equal time segments for all candidates for any particular office up for election within the coverage area of that service provider. These segments should be provided free of charge to the candidates, an obligation to the service of the public for the continued usage of the public spectrum. These segments should be rotated in such a manner that on consecutive days a different party's candidates will be given access to any particular time slot from those who used it on the previous day or will be given it on the following day. All of the service providers should be allowed to provide this service from a shared pool to lessen the operating burden, i.e. a national pool for all national offices, a state pool for all state offices, a regional/local pool for all local offices. This can be an ongoing service, dividing the time available for any specific month by the total number of offices and number of candidates running for each of those offices. Once all candidates for a given time slot have been aired once, then that particular time slot would be rotated to another office's candidates. These spots may be run more than once within each day provided that all candidates for a given office are aired within that same day. The candidates would have to abide by the following rules. The candidates would be required to speak for themselves, stating their policies, plans for the future, beliefs and backgrounds as they see fit (adhering to the indecency standards). No advertisements from parties or political action committees or other single issue groups would be accepted. Only the candidates could speak for themselves.

All proceeds received by broadcasters, cable companies and satellite service providers for running any politically oriented advertisements on their normal channels would have to go to the upkeep and operation of the pool for the political channel. Any shortfall of these funds to cover the operation of the political subchannel would then be made up by revenues from other income made by those service providers. The pool would be required to charge only for the operating expenses not met by the above sources, equal fees to all broadcasters and cable providers and satellite providers within a given market.

Sincerely,  
Rick Thomas